

March 22, 2018

Honorable Mike McGuire
Chair, Senate Governance and Finance Committee
California State Capitol, Room 408
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-322-0298

Sent via Fax & Email

Re: SB 946 (Lara) -- Support

Dear Chair McGuire and committee members:

The LA Street Vendor Campaign (LASVC) writes to express our strong support for SB 946 (Lara) to protect workers and immigrant communities and enhance economic opportunity in California.

The LASVC is a broad and diverse coalition of street vendors and 65 organizations from across the Southern California region. Individually, our member organizations are leading experts in the fields of community development, immigrant rights, civil rights, public interest law, public health, municipal law, food equity, small business development, safe and vibrant streets, and economic development. Collectively, we work to protect the rights of street vendors and enhance economic opportunities for low-income entrepreneurs. We have worked directly with thousands of vendors in all corners of the region to build leadership and strengthen networks. We have created and implemented a robust vendor-driven policy development process, culminating in a series of thoughtful and pragmatic policy recommendations. We have coordinated legal clinics and provided direct legal services to vendors enduring the unjust impacts of complete criminalization. We have created financial tools and technical assistance programs to promote and sustain vendor business development.

All of our work is led by those most impacted by the State's unjust criminalization policies: low-income vendors. Over the course of several years, hundreds of vendor leaders have collectively built a movement in Southern California and developed a policy platform that is rooted in the experiential knowledge of the vending community and further informed by legal and policy analysis and robust stakeholder input. The LASVC policy platform balances equity, opportunity, fairness, safety and accessibility. SB 946 aligns with this platform.

To date, our work has focused on Southern California. But we know the issues facing sidewalk vendors exist statewide. Across California, tens of thousands of people work as sidewalk vendors - selling delicious food and offering sought-after merchandise on public sidewalks and in public parks. For many Californians, including many immigrant families excluded from other opportunities in the formal economy, sidewalk vending offers a chance to start and grow a business. Safe, regulated sidewalk vending is also an integral part of the fabric of our communities. Studies have demonstrated that sidewalk vending generates millions in local and state tax revenue as vendors buy supplies from local businesses and circulate money in communities that are often ignored by mainstream capital. In many food desert communities,

fruit and vegetable vendors are the only source of healthy food retail available. Vendors activate commercial corridors, increase pedestrian foot traffic and provide eyes on the street to make neighborhoods safer and more dynamic.

Yet, despite the immense value to our communities, sidewalk vending is unfairly criminalized in cities and counties across California. Some jurisdictions impose an outright prohibition on sidewalk vending, while others impose onerous restrictions that severely limit vending and force workers into the informal economy. As a result, many sidewalk vendors face a harrowing catch-22: permits are impossible to obtain, but vending without a permit is prosecuted as a crime – often a misdemeanor. As a result, hardworking entrepreneurs who provide necessary goods are treated as criminals.

The criminalization of sidewalk vending has significant and devastating consequences, especially in immigrant communities. Vendors charged with a misdemeanor can face penalties of six months in jail and \$1,000 in fines, as well as the potential seizure of personal property. One misdemeanor charge can have devastating effects on entire families that rely on the vendor's income to pay rent and put food on the table. These entrepreneurs are also discouraged from investing in their own business as the confiscation of their property and court fines often wipe out any capital they may accumulate. Some immigrant vendors face the risk of being transferred to, or picked up by federal immigration officials after being released from custody. Moreover, some vendors may be at heightened risk for deportation even if they are not ultimately charged or convicted.

These risks are not merely hypothetical. Right now, a vendor and mother of five in Southern California sits in a detention center, separated from her family and facing the possibility of deportation. This situation stems directly from a simple sidewalk vending citation.¹ It is clear that federal immigration enforcement practices are currently threatening to tear immigrant families apart, and local policies that prohibit and criminalize sidewalk vending are enabling and exacerbating these risks.

SB 946 is a timely and necessary response to this injustice. SB 946 decriminalizes sidewalk vending, while allowing local jurisdictions to continue to enforce vending rules through non-criminal administrative fines and procedures. SB 946 also encourages local jurisdictions to adopt local sidewalk vending permitting regulations that will protect public safety while promoting entrepreneurship and economic mobility. By encouraging local jurisdictions to support and properly regulate sidewalk vending, SB 946 will help protect California's low-income immigrants and workers, promote safe and regulated vending, and create new opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic mobility throughout the state.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We urge you to support SB 946.

¹ Liset Marquez, "Street vendor facing deportation after Rancho Cucamonga arrest," Daily Bulletin, October 23, 2017. <https://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/10/23/street-vendor-facing-deportation-after-rancho-cucamonga-arrest/>

Sincerely,

The LA Street Vendor Campaign

CC:

Senator Janet Nguyen, Vice Chair

Senator Jim Beall

Senator Ed Hernandez

Senator Robert M. Hertzberg

Senator Ricardo Lara

Senator John M. W. Moorlach